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# NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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## Bird Notes for 1920 from Southeastern Alaska by G. Willett.

The year 1920 was spent by the writer in the southern part of southeastern Alaska, the principal points visited being as follows: Craig, west coast of Prince of Wales Island, January 1st to May 10th; and August 15th to September 16 Forrester Island, May 11th to August 14th; en route Craig to Wrangell, September 17th to 25th; and vicinity of Wrangell, from September 26th to the end of the year. Short trips were also made to several localities near these points, notably Sea Otter Harbor, Dall Island (August 23-27), Klawak Salt Lake, Prince of Wales Island (September 1-3), and Anita Bay, Etolin Island (November 12-14).

As this region has been frequently described in various scientific journals, it will not be necessary to go into exhaustive detail here. The whole region under discussion is composed of islands of various sizes and shapes, and with their hundreds of miles of shore line. These islands, large and small, are invariably heavily timbered with spruce, hemlock and cedar from the shore line to above 2500 feet altitude, while in more open marshy places the squaw pine (Pinus contortus) grows abundantly. Along streams and bordering the shore in places are various deciduous trees, notably the alder, willow, crab-apple and edder-berry. The principal shrubs are the blue-berry, redberry, black currant, salal, swamp honeysuckle and devil club. Forrester Island is a small, rocky island lying in the open sea about fifteen miles west of the nearest point of Dall Island. It is less than five miles long and from a half mile to a mile wide. This is probably the greatest breeding grounds for sea-birds on the west coast of North America, at least south of Bering Sea.

At the opening of the year there was not a very great variety of birds in evidence as compared to those to be found in some more favored climes. The principal species resident throughout the year are: Marbled Murrelet (Brachyramphus marmoratus), Pigeon Guillemot (Cepphus columba), California Murre (Uria troille californica), Glaucous-winged Gull (Larus glaucescens), Herring Gull (Larus argentatus), Pelagic Cormorant (Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus), American Merganser (Mergus americanus), White-cheeked Goose (Branta canadensis occidentalis), Northwestern Coast Heron (Ardea herodias fannini), Black Oystercatcher (Haematopus bachmani), Sooty Grouse (Dendragapus obscurus fuliginosus), Franklin's Grouse (Canachites franklini), Alexander's Ptarmigan (Lagopus lagopus alexandrae), Sharp-shinned Hawk (Accipiter velox), Alaska Rea-tail (Buteo borealis alascensis) (rare), Northern Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus alascanus), Peale's Falcon (Falco peregrinus pealei), Saw-whet Owl (Cryste laux acadica), Kennicott's Screech Owl (Otus asio kennicotti), Dusky Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus saturatus), Pygmy Owl (Glaucidium gnoma gnoma), Western Belted Kingfisher (Streptoceryle alcyon caurina), Sitka Hairy Woodpecker (Dryobates villosus sitkensis), Red-breasted Sapsucker (Sphyrapicus ruber ruber), Northwestern Flicker (Colaptes cafer saturator), Steller's Jay (Cyanocitta stelleri stelleri), Northern Raven (Corvus corax principalis), Northwestern Crow (Corvus caurinus), Kadiak Pine Grosbeak (Pinicola enucleator flammula), Pine Siskin (Spinus pinus), Sitka Crossbill ( ), Oregon Junco (Junco hyemalis oregonus), Sooty Song Sparrow (Melospiza melodia rufina), Townsend's Fox Sparrow (Passerella iliaca townsendi), Dipper (Cinclus mexicanus unicolor), Western Winter Wren (Tannus hiemalis pacific), California Creeper (Certhia familiaris occidentalis), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (Penthestes rufescens rufescens), Western Golden-crowned Kinglet (Regulus satrapa olivaceus) and Varied Thrush (Ixoreus naevius naevius).

Among the winter visitants are the Holboell's Grebe (Colymbus holboelli), Horned Grebe (Colymbus auritus), Loon (Gavia immer), Short-billed Gull (Larus brachyrhynchus), White-crested Cormorant (Phalacrocorax auritus cincinatus), Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator), Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos), Scaup Buck (Harila marila), American Golden-eye (Clangula clangula americana), Barrow's Golden-eye (Clangula islandica), Buffle-head (Charitonetta albeola), Old-squaw

(Harelda hyemalis), Harlequin Duck (Histrionica histrionica), American Scoter (Oidemia americana), Surf Scoter (O. perspicillata), White-winged Scoter (O. deglandi), Aleutian Sandpiper (Arquatella maritima couesi), Black Turnstone (Arenaria melanocephala), Western Goshawk (Astur atricapillus striatulus), Rusty Blackbird (Euphagus carolinus), Western Tree Sparrow (Spizella monticola ochracea) and Yakutat Song Sparrow (Melospiza melodia caurina).

Among the migrants noted the past year are the Yellow-billed Loon (Gavia adamsi), Pacific Loon (G. pacifica), Pomarine Jaeger (Stercorarius pomarinus), Parasitic Jaeger (S. parasiticus), Pacific Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla pollicaris), Bonaparte's Gull (Larus ptoladelpia), Sooty Shearwater (Puffinus griseus), Slender-billed Shearwater (P. tenuirostris), Green-winged Teal (Nettion carolinense (remains into December), Pintail (Dafila acuta), Baldpate (Mareca americana), White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons gambeli), Cackling Goose (Branta canadensis minima), Northern Phalarope (Lobipes lobatus), Wilson's Snipe (Gallinago delicata (remains into December), Long-billed Dowitcher (Macrorhamphus griseus scolopaceus), Least Sandpiper (Pisobia minutilla), Red-backed Sandpiper (Pelodna alpina sakhalina), Western Sandpiper (Ereunetes mauri Cabanis), Greater Yellow-legs (Totanus melanoleucus), Wandering Tattler (Heteractitis incanus), Spotted Sandpiper (Actitis macularia), Semipalmated Plover (Aegialitis semipalmata), Surf-bird (Aphriza virgata), Pigeon Hawk (Falco columbarius columbarius), Short-eared Owl (Asio flammeus), Valdez Downy Woodpecker (Dryobates pubescens glacialis), Alaska Three-toed Woodpecker (Picoides americanus fasciatus), Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus luteus), Alaska Longspur (Calcarius lapponicus alascensis), Western Savannah Sparrow (Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus), Aleutian Savannah Sparrow (P. sandwichensis sandwichensis), Golden-crowned Sparrow (Zonotrichia coronata), Forbush's Sparrow (Melospiza lincolni striata), Northern Shrike (Lanius borealis) and Townsend's Warbler (Dendroica townsendi).

The first of the summer visitants to appear in the spring was the Western Robin (Planesticus migratorius propinquus), which was fairly plentiful April 9th. This bird also remains well into October in the fall, so it is possible that its migration is a short one. The next species noted was the Rufous Hummingbird (Selasphorus rufus) on April 24th. Townsend's Warblers (Dendroica townsendi) and Tree Swallows (Iridoprocne bicolor) appeared the same day, April 27th. The first Lutescent Warbler (Vermivora celata lutescens) was seen May 1st, and the first Dwarf Hermit Thrush (Hylocichla guttata nanus), May 2nd,

On May 4th the writer was joined by Sidney B. Peyton, of the Cooper Ornithological Club and the next several days were occupied in collecting eggs of the Northern Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus alascanus) on nearby islands. The nests visited were all situated in spruce trees and from fifty to one hundred and ten feet from the ground. The writer does not know of a single instance of the bald eagle nesting on a cliff in this region.

On May 10th we packed our camp equipment on the writer's twenty-one foot power dory and proceeded to Waterfall, Prince of Wales Island. We remained there over night and on the morning of May 11th went out through Meare's Pass, between Dall and Suemez Islands, to the open sea and headed for Forrester Island, arriving safely shortly after noon in a pouring rain storm. The rest of the day was occupied in establishing camp and by nightfall we were comfortably situated for the summer. We were joined by the writer's family on June 1st, and on July 9th, A. M. Bailey of the U.S. Biological Survey landed on the island and remained with us until July 21st.

At the time we reached the island only the larger land birds were nesting. The earliest nesting bird in this locality is the Northern Raven (Corvus corax Principis Palis). A nest of this species which contained three young nearly ready to fly was examined May 15th, and another containing four young, able to fly quite well, was seen May 22nd. Both of these nests were typically situated -- at least so far as this region is concerned -- about forty feet up in spruce trees in dense woods.

The next bird to begin nesting is Peale's Falcon (Falco peregrinus pealei). Two nests of this species were noted, one containing one downy young and three added eggs May 12th, and the other, four young at least two weeks old May 18th. Both these nests were in natural cavities in rocky bluffs overlooking the ocean.

the first being approximately 500 feet above the water and the second not over fifty or sixty feet. The Northern Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus alascanus) was nesting generally during the month of May and about twenty nests were examined. Most of these contained two eggs or young each, though one was the nest complement on one or two occasions, and a nest containing three eggs was found May 27th.

The Northwestern Crow (Corvus caurinus) is rather a common breeding bird on the Island and several nests containing eggs were noted between May 13th and June 1st. The majority of these were in young spruce trees, though one was among the roots of a windfall, one in a crevice in a bank, and two on the ground under boulders. One nest containing four eggs was eight feet up on the horizontal limb of a spruce tree on a hillside, and fifty feet further up in the same tree was a nest with two eggs of the Bald Eagle.

The Townsend Sparrow (Passerella iliaca townsendi), Lutescent Warbler (Vermivora celata lutescens), Russet-backed Thrush (Hylocichla ustulata ustulata) and Varied Thrush (Ixoreus naevius naevius) were nesting commonly on the islands and numerous nest were noted. The Sooty Song Sparrow (Melospiza melodia rufina) Dwarf Hermit Thrush (Hylocichla guttata nanus), and Oregon Junco (Junco hyemalis oregonus) were nesting in smaller numbers, one nest of the Junco and two each of the Song Sparrow and Thrush being examined. The Saw-whet Owl (Cryptoglaux acadica scotaea), Rufous Hummingbird (Selasphorus rufus), Western Flycatcher (Empidonax difficilis difficilis), Chesonus-backed Chickadee (Penthestes rufescens rufescens), California Creeper (Certhia familiaris occidentalis), and Western Golden-crowned Kinglet (Regulus satrapa clivaceus), were present throughout the summer and were undoubtedly breeding, though no nests were seen. A set of seven eggs of the Chickadee, together with the nest of deer hair, were taken at Craig by the writer's son on May 17th.

The first sea birds to begin nesting were Cassin's Auklet (Ptychoramphus aleuticus), Rhinoceros Auklet (Cerorhinca monocerata) and Ancient Murrelet (Synthliboramphus antiquus). The first of these has quite an extended nesting season and fresh eggs may be found from the last of April until June. The majority of the eggs of the Murrelet are deposited between May 10th and 20th, and those of the Rhinoceros Auklet between May 20th and June 5th. The burrows of these three species are similarly situated, generally in the woods, and frequently (particularly as regards the Murrelet) among tree roots and under logs. None of them frequent the vicinity of the nesting colonies in the daytime, incubating birds changing after dark and before dawn. Neither do they feed to any extent in the immediate vicinity of Forrester Island. The favorite feeding ground of the Rhinoceros Auklet seems to be in the channels around Dall, Suemez and Prince of Wales islands and they are common in these localities throughout the summer, in early fall following the schools of needlefish at least as far as Craig, and making daily a round trip of nearly a hundred miles to and from the breeding grounds. At the time when large young are in the nest the writer has noted this bird leaving the inside waters in the evening for his long homeward journey with his mouth so full of needlefish that they hung out in rows on both sides of his bill. They begin to arrive in the vicinity of Forrester Island just before dusk and may be seen flying back and forth in restless companies awaiting darkness before visiting the nest. Cassin's Auklet and the Murrelet feed principally well out at sea. The young Murrelets come to the water in the night-time when only three or four days old and proceed immediately with their parents to the open ocean. Even at the time when thousands are coming down to the water each night, they are not to be found anywhere in the vicinity of the Island the next morning.

The grass-covered slopes on the steep bluffs overlooking the ocean are the home of thousands of Tufted Puffins (Lunda cirrhata). These birds arrive at the Island early in May and by June 1st are beginning to nest generally. The Horned Puffins (Fratercula corniculata), though common, are far less abundant than their tufted relatives. They also arrive somewhat later, not generally becoming plentiful until the latter part of May. They begin to lay about June 20th and fresh eggs may be found until quite late in July. On Forrester Island they do

not nest in burrows as do the Tufted Puffins, but deposit their single egg in natural crevices in the rocks and among boulders, often in such places as to be entirely inaccessible.

The Pigeon Guillemot (Cepphus columba) and the California Murre (Uria troill californica) are the two remaining representatives of the family alcidae that summer on the Island. The former nest commonly in caves and crevices, much as it does along the coast further to the southward, but a peculiar feature in this locality is the fact that one egg seems to be more often the nest complement than two. The sea pigeons generally deposit their eggs between the middle and end of June. The California Murre nests abundantly on the more precipitous slopes of the island as well as on outlying rocks. They are the latest of the seabirds to nest, not beginning to lay until early July and fresh eggs being in evidence as late as August 5th. By reason of the depredations of ravens and crows and the fact that the clumsy murrens themselves often kick their eggs off the nesting ledge into the sea, many of these birds must lay several times before they are successful in raising young.

The Glaucous-winged Gull (Larus occidentalis) has also nested in the usual numbers during the month of June. The past summer, however, they were hard pressed for food. For some reason the herring, the natural food of the gulls, though present in considerable numbers throughout the summer, seldom rose to the surface of the water where the gulls could obtain them. The puffins and cormorants had no difficulty in securing their usual rations by diving, but the unfortunate gulls, never having learned to dive, were often forced to seek their subsistence elsewhere. In early summer they ate shell-fish, crabs, etc., to a large extent, and later, after the cormorants and murrens had laid their eggs, these constituted the most important item on the menu of the gulls. Though egg stealing is a well known habit of the Western Gull (Larus occidentalis) along our more southern shores, this is the first year that the writer has noted its practice by glaucescens, and he believes that when able to procure their natural food they do not resort to it. The immature gulls that generally arrive at the Island in large numbers during early summer were unusually scarce this year, a fact probably due to the difficulty in obtaining food there. To the same cause might be attributed the almost entire absence of the Herring Gull (Larus argentatus), which species generally nests on outlying rocks, though in very small numbers. One or two adult and a few immature birds were seen during the season, but in no instance under conditions that indicated nesting.

Owing to the combined depredations of the ravens, crows and gulls, the nesting of the Pelagic Cormorant (Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus) was almost a complete failure. Though they built nests and laid eggs as usual during late June and early July, the eggs were generally stolen faster than they could lay them, and of a number of nests examined in early August, the majority were empty and two was the largest number of young to be found in a nest.

Two species of petrel, the Forked-tailed (Oceanodroma furcata) and Beal's (Oceanodroma beali), nest in immense numbers on a small timbered islet off the south end of the main island, the latter species probably outnumbering the former at least three or four to one. The majority of their burrows are in the shelter of the woods and those of the two species are very similar in structure, being from two to three feet in depth and generally more or less curved. The Fork-tailed Petrel seems to have more of a propensity for burrowing under logs and among tree roots than does his darker colored cousin, but burrows of the two are often found together under exactly similar conditions. On an average there is about a month's difference in the time that the two deposit their eggs, furcata laying mostly between May 15th and June 5th, and beali from June 20th to July 15th. Though the eggs of furcata average larger than those of beali, in many instances the difference is not apparent. The petrels, like the auklets, approach and leave their nesting grounds only during the hours of darkness. Their feeding grounds are evidently well out at sea and they are not to be seen in daytime in the vicinity of the island except during very foggy weather. This characteristic of remaining near the breeding grounds during foggy weather also applies to the Rhinoceros Auklet. Whether the birds fear their inability to find their way through the fog is, of course, impossible to determine, but this might

be at least a plausible deduction.

The only shore-bird known to nest on The Island is the Black Oystercatcher (Haematopus bachmani) of which there are probably thirty or forty pairs. Several nests were noted between June 2nd and July 6th. They were in the usual localities, some on rocky promontories, others on rocks detached entirely from the shore, or on gravelly beaches. In some instances there was practically no nesting material but more often the nest was fairly well lined with chips of rock and limpet shells. The eggs were two or three in number and were easily overlooked against the rocky background.

In late July and August, after the close of their nesting season on the larger islands, the Marbled Murrelet (Brachyramphus marmoratus) appears in some numbers around the island, as do also, though less plentifully the Blue Heron (Ardea herodias herodias) and Western Belted Kingfisher (Streptoceryle alcyon caurina). Though Hairy Woodpeckers were not uncommon on the Island during some past seasons, none were seen this summer. Nor did we see any Sitka Cross-bills though this bird is generally more or less common throughout the summer. This Crossbill seems to be very irregular in its habits, in fact far more so than any other bird of the region. It was abundant throughout the summer of 1919, raised young during September of that year (at Craig), was present in apparently undiminished numbers through the following winter, raised young again in April, and seemingly entirely disappeared shortly thereafter. Not a single bird of this species has been noted between early summer and the date of the present writing, Dec. 1st.

The writer, with his household, left Forrester Island August 14th and came in to Craig. From here a short trip was made to Sea Otter Harbor, Dall Island. The only birds of particular interest observed in this locality were the Surf-bird (Aphriza virgata), Alexander's Ptarmigan (Lagopus lagopus alexandrae), and Pygmy Owl (Glaucidium gnoma gnoma). A large flock of Surf-birds was found on rocks in the harbor, together with Black Turnstones (Arenaria melanocephala) and Black Oystercatchers (Haematopus bachmani). A goodly series of specimens were secured, about half being adults and the rest birds of the year. A specimen of the Pygmy Owl, the first the writer had seen in Alaska, was taken here; also several Willow Ptarmigan (Lagopus lagopus lagopus) in the dark post-breeding plumage.

After returning to Craig, a few days were spent collecting in that locality before moving to Wrangell. Several Pomarine Jaegers (Stercorarius pomarinus) were taken, also a pair of White-cheeked Geese (Branta canadensis occidentalis) with their stomachs filled with blueberries.

The fall migrants and winter visitants noted since coming to Wrangell are incorporated in a general way in the first part of this article.

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#### Tacoma Notes by J. Hooper Bowles.

There has been very little of interest in migratory birds this fall, unless it be their most unusual scarcity, which is indeed noteworthy in itself. This had been especially noticable in the ducks, of which practically no northern migrants had put in an appearance up to November 19th, on which date large numbers of Baldpates were reported from the Nisqually Flats.

The great increase in locally raised ducks was apparent at the opening of the hunting season, October 1st, when limit bags were common. Mallards were very plentiful and there were numerous Pintail, but the Green-winged Teal showed by far the largest increase. Very large flocks of these teal were reported from Nisqually and vicinity, and they were also in large numbers around Tacoma. One female Cinnamon Teal was shot at Nisqually on Oct. 3rd by Mr. L. W. Brehm, of Tacoma, who very kindly presented it to me. This is the first specimen actually collected on the east side of the Cascades, to my knowledge, although it is known that they breed sparingly in certain of our freshwater marshes. A few Baldpates were also present, as usual, long before the opening of the season, and it would be extremely interesting to know just where these birds are raised. It was only in recent years that we found the nesting haunts of our locally raised Pintails and several others,